



Nicholas Shadrin in 1960.

The Spy Who Never Came Back

The case of Nicholas Shadrin is a grim reminder of how hard it is for a defector to escape his past.

Shadrin, a young captain in the Soviet Navy who fled to the West, disappeared on a December night in Vienna in 1975. For a decade, his fate was a mystery. Now, Soviet defector Vitaly Yurchenko apparently has confirmed what was long suspected—Shadrin died at the hands of the KGB. Still unknown: Whether he was also a victim of CIA incompetence or duplicity.

Flight. His life in the West began in 1959 when he took a Polish woman he later married onto a Navy launch and across the Baltic Sea to Sweden. They came to the U.S., and he worked as an intelligence analyst. The KGB tried to recruit him in 1966. Shadrin tipped off the CIA and agreed to pose as a double agent. His trip to Vienna nine years later was ostensibly to bolster that role.

Ewa Shadrin, who lives in a Virginia suburb of Washington, believes her husband may have been used as bait by the CIA to enhance the credibility of another double agent—a man who may have been ordered by Moscow to lure Shadrin into a KGB trap. Her lawyer, Richard Copaken, says CIA surveillance of Shadrin's Vienna meeting with his Soviet handlers was mysteriously called off. Declares Copaken, "He was thrown to the wolves."

The FBI told Mrs. Shadrin in late October they now have evidence her husband is dead. Her lawyer says other government sources tell him Soviet agents fatally chloroformed Shadrin as they tried to spirit him out of Austria. While this was happening, his wife sat in the Vienna Opera House awaiting his return.